

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9579
INFO AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY DAKAR
AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY MADRID
DIA WASHDC

S E C R E T PARIS 11129

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PBOR, MO, FR, MR, AG
SUBJ: SAHARA DEVELOPMENTS

1. IN AN APRIL 3 CONVERSATION DEVOTED LARGELY TO OTHER SUBJECTS QUAI DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR FRANCOPHONE AFRICA, DE LA ROCHERE, COMMENTED THAT THE GOF WAS CONCERNED ABOUT THE EFFECTIVENESS OF POLISARIO ATTACKS ON THE ZOUERATE-NOUADIBOU RAIL LINE. A SHIFT OF POLISARIO TACTICS TO SMALLER-SCALE SABOTAGE TYPE OPERATIONS WAS ANTICIPATED AFTER FRENCH AVIATION MADE THE PREVIOUS TACTICS OF LARGE-SCALE ATTACKS TOO COSTLY, BUT THE FRENCH MILITARY FEELS THAT THE LINE COULD BE BETTER DEFENDED. DE LA ROCHERE SAID THAT THERE IS CONSIDERABLE EXPERTISE WITHIN THE FRENCH MILITARY ON HOW TO KEEP A RAILROAD RUNNING IN SOMEWHAT SIMILAR CIRCUMSTANCES AND CONSIDERATION IS BEING GIVEN TO HOW THIS EXPERTISE CAN BE PUT TO USE IN MAURITANIA.

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2. DE LA ROCHERE SAID THAT THERE IS CONCERN THAT THE POLISARIO MIGHT NOW TURN TO URBAN TERRORISM. THIS COULD HAVE A PARTICULARLY NEGATIVE EFFECT ON THE EXPATRIATE POPULATION NECESSARY TO KEEP THE IRON MINE COMPLEX RUNNING. THE FRENCH HAD BEEN PLEASED BY THE VIGOR WITH WHICH MAURITANIAN OFFICIALS HAD CONDUCTED HOUSE-TO-HOUSE SEARCHES AFTER THE FEBRUARY GRENADE

INCIDENT IN NOUADIBOU AND ALARMED BY QUANTITY OF LETHAL MATERIAL THE SEARCHES TURNED UP. THE MAURITANIANS OBVIOUSLY NEED TO HAVE BETTER CONTROL OVER THE POPULATION IN URBAN AREAS. THE GIRM HAS REQUESTED THAT THE FRENCH PROVIDE ADVISORS IN THIS FIELD. A POSITIVE RESPONSE IS LIKELY.

3. ON THE POSITIVE SIDE, DE LA ROCHERE SAID THAT THE GOF WAS ENCOURAGED BY INFORMATION THAT FOR THE PAST FEW MONTHS THERE HAVE BEEN NO DEFECTIONS OF MAURITANIANS TO THE POLISARIO WHICH COULD MEAN A PEAKING OF POLISARIO STRENGTH IN TERMS OF ITS ABILITY TO TUG AT THE LOYALTIES OF MAURITANIAN CITIZENS. HE ALSO NOTED (AS HAS EMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT) THAT FOR ALL MAURITANIA'S TROUBLES, THERE IS LITTLE EVIDENCE OF REAL OPPOSITION TO THE LEADERSHIP OF MOKTAR OULD DADDAH.
HARTMAN

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NNN

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